

30 years of studies have shown that this desensitizes our children to violence and to the consequences of it.

We now know that by the time the typical American child reaches the age of 18, he or she has seen 200,000 dramatized acts of violence and 40,000 dramatized murders. Kids become attracted to it and more numb to its consequences. As their exposure to violence grows, so, in some deeply troubling cases of particularly vulnerable children, does the taste for it. We should not be surprised that half the video games a typical seventh grader plays are violent.

Anyone who doubts the impact of the cultural assault can look at what now, over 30 years, amounts to somewhere over 300 studies, all of whom show that there is a link between sustained exposure, hour after hour, day after day, week after week, year after year, to violent entertainment and violent behavior.

What the studies say, quite simply, is that the boundary between fantasy and reality violence, which is a clear line for most adults, can become very blurred for vulnerable children. Kids steeped in the culture of violence do become desensitized to it and more capable of committing it themselves.

That is why I have strongly urged people in the entertainment industry to consider the consequences of what they create and how they advertise it. One can value the first amendment right to free speech and at the same time care for and act with restraint. Our administration has worked to give parents more tools to protect their kids, to block violent programming from entering their living room with the V-chip and the rating system. We've made progress on parental screening for Internet and ratings for Internet game sites.

Still, when violent entertainment made for adults is marketed to children, it undermines the rating system designed to protect them. And if you look at some of these ads, it's hard to argue with a straight face that the games were made for adults in the first place, like the one Arthur mentioned.

Advertisements have a particular role here. They have the power to egg children on and lure them in. Every parent knows what response a commercial for sugar cereal or the

latest "Star Wars" toy will get from their children. People advertise because it works. They want that product, and one way or the other, they're determined to get it. So we ought to think twice about the impact of ads for so-called "first-person shooter video games," like the recent ad for a game that invites players to, and I quote, "Get in touch with your gun-toting, cold-blooded murdering side."

I was given—today Arthur brought me the magazine with the ad that he mentioned, and he was kind enough to mark it for me. There really is a gun here. It says, "More fun than shooting your neighbor's cat." I was given another ad that says, "What kind of psycho drives a school bus into a war zone?" And here's a school bus, heavily armed. This came out right after the incident in Springfield, Oregon.

Here's an ad that turns the argument I just made on its head: "Psychiatrists say it's important to feel something when you kill." And then it goes on to say, "You ought to get this technology because it bumps, and you feel it." It says, "Every sensation, every vibration, every mutilation, nine programmable weapons buttons. Customizable feedback software. Push the stick that pushes back, and feel your pain." And here's one that's the most unbelievable of all. It says, "Kill your friends guilt-free."

Now, obviously, Arthur has the inner strength and the good upbringing to reject that kind of violent appeal. Most of our children do, but not all of our children do. We cannot be surprised when this kind of thing has an impact on our most vulnerable children. Is it 100 percent to blame? No. It's easier to get guns in this society. Parents on average spend 22 hours a week less with their children than they did 30 years ago because of the demands of work and commuting, the busyness of daily life.

But when you put it all together, there are bound to be explosive negative consequences. That's why today I am asking the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission to study the extent to which the video game, music, and movie markets do actually market violence to children, and whether those industries are abiding by their own voluntary systems of regulations.